

DOWNTOWN WORCESTER

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

FY25



Annual Report

Our Year at a Glance

Downtown Worcester is where our city gathers — to celebrate, to connect, and to discover something new at every turn. In the heart of the Commonwealth's second-largest city, this neighborhood is growing more vibrant, more welcoming, and more alive each day.

This year, the Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District expanded events that brought thousands together, unveiled bold public art that celebrates belonging, and enhanced beautification, hospitality, and safety across the district. More people are choosing to live, work, and build businesses here, adding to Downtown's energy and possibility.

With momentum on our side, we are shaping a Downtown that reflects the pride and potential of Worcester.



13,000

hours of service provided by
the Downtown Worcester
Ambassador team



126

hanging flower baskets
+ 36 planters installed &
maintained by the BID
throughout Downtown

53,000

pounds of trash removed
from streets & sidewalks
in our district boundaries



78

acres of Downtown
Worcester cared for
and supported daily
by the investment of
the BID's property
owner members

1



new public art
installation
spanning 90 feet
of Salem Street

11.6k+

social media followers
on Instagram,
Facebook & LinkedIn



16,000+

people joined us Downtown
for new & legacy events

365+

graffiti tags
removed from public
& private property





Clockwise from left:
Downtown in Bloom Flower Giveaway at City Square Park;
Mystic Bowie's Talking Dreads performs at the 2025 Out to Lunch
Festival & Farmers' Market on the Common; Ritmos Dance Company
performs at the "You Belong Here" Celebration on Salem Street
(Photos: Mike Hendrickson)

About the Downtown Worcester BID

The Downtown Worcester BID is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization formed in 2018. We represent over 100 property owners in 78 acres of Downtown Worcester, Massachusetts, and we are all about making Downtown Worcester better.

This is a community effort. We bring together local property owners, businesses, residents, organizations, and the City of Worcester to create a vibrant, welcoming, and economically and culturally thriving downtown for all.

Our work is centered on four key focus areas: Cleaning, Safety & Hospitality; Cultural Placemaking & Beautification; Marketing & Public Relations; and Advocacy & Policy.

Our Boundaries

Our district is bounded by Main Street, Myrtle Street, Foster Street, and McGrath Boulevard. The areas in dark grey on the map at the right represent the properties within the Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District.



Dear Friends & Partners,

The past year has been one of growth and momentum for the Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District (BID). It was also a period of transition that underscored what makes this organization strong: our people, our partners, and our purpose. Guided by collaboration, trust, and a shared commitment to Downtown's future, the BID has continued to build on a solid foundation while welcoming a new chapter of leadership.

When the BID is at its best, much of our work happens quietly behind the scenes, coordinating, connecting, and elevating the incredible people and organizations already doing great things here.

Our progress depends on the long-term dedication of those who believe in this neighborhood. Each accomplishment in these pages reflects the partnership of our property owner members, local businesses, the City of Worcester, elected officials, community organizations, and neighbors.

Behind every one of our achievements is also the incredible BID staff. Their creativity, professionalism, and care bring our mission to life each day — whether coordinating events, supporting our Ambassadors on the streets, or finding new ways to make Downtown shine. We see ourselves as conveners of interests and collaborators at heart. We lift others up, turn up the volume, and add a little extra BID team sparkle in the way only we know how.

From expanding the Out to Lunch Festival & Farmers' Market on the Common to unveiling the "You Belong Here" public art and lighting installation at the Worcester Public Library, and from maintaining our year-round Ambassador Program to celebrating our most colorful season of flowers yet, together we are shaping Downtown into the 18-hour destination that Worcester deserves.

As we continue moving forward with energy and intention, this year's accomplishments have strengthened our foundation and positioned us to keep raising the bar for our district.

Downtown is a neighborhood that belongs to all of us. We are proud to serve as its stewards and to continue building a place where everyone feels welcome, connected, and inspired to be part of its story.

With gratitude,



Julian Wade
Board Chair



Katelyn O'Brien
Executive Director



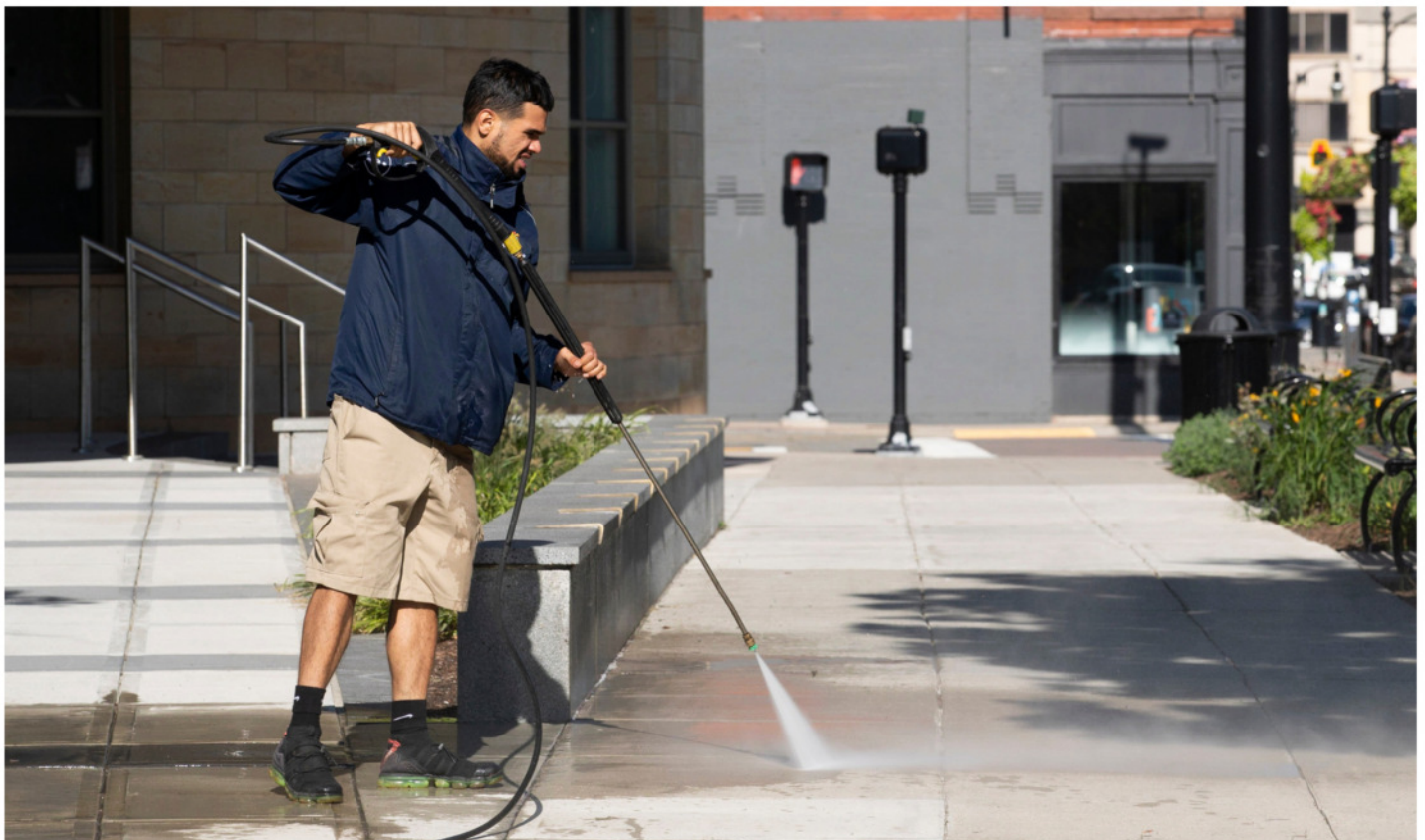
Left to right:
Board Chair Julian Wade with Erika Davis Wade accepting the inaugural Wyatt Wade Downtown Impact Award at the Downtown Worcester BID 2024 Annual Meeting
(Photo: Mike Hendrickson)

Executive Director Katelyn O'Brien welcomes neighbors to the June 2025 Downtown Worcester Community Meeting in City Square Park
(Photo: Allan Dines)



Caring for Downtown

Downtown Worcester's Ambassadors are the core of our operations and make a visible difference every day. In partnership with Streetplus, a national leader in downtown management, they keep the district clean, welcoming, and cared for year-round, from removing litter and graffiti to assisting visitors and supporting safety. When people talk about how great Downtown looks, this is the team behind it.



Right:
Ambassador Team members
assist at the 2025 Winter Festival
(Photo: Mike Hendrickson)

Below:
Cleaning Ambassador Brian
snow blows on Franklin Street
(Photo: Matt Wright)

Ambassador Team Lead Ja engages
Downtown neighbors with kindness
(Photo: Mike Hendrickson)



Left page, clockwise from left:
Cleaning Ambassador Brian provides daily
cleaning and trash removal in the district
(Photo: Matt Wright)

The team supports events like the Winter Festival
(Photo: Mike Hendrickson)

Ambassadors supplement snow removal efforts
for our property owner members in winter
(Photo: Matt Wright)

Operations Manager Miguel and the crew
provide services like power washing
(Photo: Matt Wright)

Cleaning, Safety & Hospitality

Our Ambassadors maintained Downtown's sidewalks and public spaces every day — sweeping, removing litter, tackling graffiti, and keeping high-traffic areas looking their best. They greeted visitors with local knowledge and a friendly presence, helping workers, residents, and guests feel safe, supported, and welcome in the heart of the city.

Snow Operations

Through the winter season, the Ambassador team monitored sidewalk conditions, treated sidewalks and curb cuts before storms, and cleared snow and ice to keep Downtown walkable and accessible. The BID's supplemental sidewalk snow removal services from Perrone Landscaping also ensured continuous coverage during weather events so businesses were better able to stay open and the district remained safe for everyone.

Community Engagement

Our Community Engagement Ambassadors were once again a part-time seasonal presence spring through fall, when Downtown's evenings are most active. They continued to build relationships with the many people who spend time here, checking in with businesses, greeting patrons, and offering support wherever needed. Their regular presence has helped the neighborhood feel more comfortable, cared for, and welcoming well into the nighttime hours.

Public Art: You Belong Here

This year, we proudly unveiled “You Belong Here,” the largest and most ambitious public art and lighting project the Downtown Worcester BID has taken on to date. Designed to affirm belonging in the heart of our city, the installation has transformed the Worcester Public Library’s Salem Street façade into a vibrant, illuminated gateway that welcomes everyone who passes through.

Years in the making, “You Belong Here” was developed in partnership with the Worcester Public Library and Library Foundation, created by Worcester artist Sharinna Travieso, and shaped by community input through workshops led by Creative Hub Worcester. The 90-foot installation brings bold color and light to one of Downtown’s busiest pedestrian corridors; increasing visibility, encouraging foot-traffic, and amplifying local pride day and night.



Clockwise from left:
Community members paint a smaller, paint-by-numbers version of the “You Belong Here” artwork at the unveiling; A Ferris wheel is set up for the celebration; The final “You Belong Here” art and lighting installation brightens Salem Street

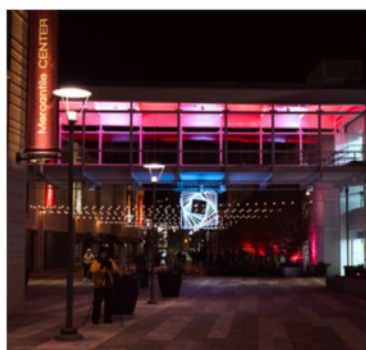
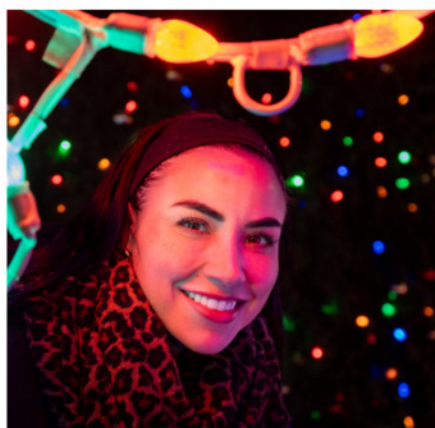
Right page:
Worcester artist Sharinna Travieso and partygoers look on at the “You Belong Here” unveiling; 3-D illuminated features of the installation bring much-needed lighting to this area of Downtown; Local media personality Manny Alvarado of Manny Jae Media broadcast live from the celebration; Local content creators like Sarah Malone capture the event and artwork to share with their social media followers; Dancers from Ritmos Dance Company perform on Salem Street

(Photos: Mike Hendrickson)



We celebrated its official debut in October 2025 with the “You Belong Here” Celebration, when we shut down Salem Street and threw a party for thousands of neighbors. The event was complete with a Ferris wheel, local food and beverage truck favorites like George’s Coney Island and 90+ Cellars, music from DJ Kid Kash, dancing in the street with Ritmos Dance Company, a paint-by-numbers mural for the community to co-create, and so much more.

The installation has also already earned national recognition. In 2025, the International Downtown Association (IDA) honored the Downtown Worcester BID with a Downtown Achievement Award of Excellence for its resourceful, community-centered impact on public space through this project.



Clockwise from left:
Holiday lighting for the 2024–25 season includes trees wrapped in string lights and brightly colored uplighting on the Common; Attendees of the BID's Holiday Lights Photo Walk capture magical installations such as the Christmas tree at Bay State Bank; "Illuminaciones" by Zebbler Studios is suspended at Mercantile Court; Colorful holiday décor creates abundant Downtown photo ops

Right page:
"Pillars of Monumental Truth" from Fractal Tribe stands tall over the Worcester Common Oval; Photographers of all experience levels join the Holiday Lights Photo Walk, which kicks off at Carroll Plaza

(Photos: Jaime Flores)

Lighting Up Winter

This winter, the BID once again transformed Downtown into a bright and welcoming destination, illuminating street trees and public spaces with seasonal magic found around every corner. Our lighting program brings beauty and excitement to the colder months while drawing people into the district to celebrate, explore, and experience Downtown as a place full of warmth, joy, and community all season long.

Festival of Lights

Each year, the BID collaborates with the City of Worcester to create a magical backdrop for Festival of Lights, the city's beloved kickoff to the holiday season. Thousands of residents and visitors gathered on the Common as the tree was lit, ice skating on the Oval rink opened, and Downtown transformed into a winter celebration.

This year, we helped bring large-scale illuminated artworks to the district, including the towering "Pillars of Monumental Truth" by local artist collective Fractal Tribe, and Zebbler Studios' "Iluminaciones" suspended at Mercantile Court. These installations helped extend the joy and energy of Festival of Lights throughout the season.

Holiday Lights Photo Walk

To spark more winter exploration, we also introduced our first ever Holiday Lights Photo Walk, led by local photographer Jaime Flores. Professional and amateur photographers alike joined us for a guided stroll through some of Downtown's brightest highlights — from Carroll Plaza to glowing street trees to the Bay State Bank Christmas tree to illuminated pieces on the Common. The evening invited participants to experience the district at its most vibrant, discover new viewpoints of familiar spaces, and celebrate Downtown as a destination.



The Festival of Lights is a cherished tradition that highlights the creativity and spirit of our city. The Downtown Worcester BID team consistently elevates the experience and helps create magic in our city center.



-Fabian Barracks, Cultural Development Officer
City of Worcester

Downtown in Bloom

Downtown Worcester's flower program brings hanging baskets and sidewalk planters bursting with color to the district from spring through fall. It's one of the BID's most-loved initiatives; not only for the beauty it adds, but for what it represents: that someone cares for this neighborhood. In partnership with family-owned Bemis Farms Nursery, we select vibrant arrangements and ensure they are watered, fertilized, and flourishing all season long. The result is a Downtown that feels more inviting, more joyful, and unmistakably loved.



*Clockwise from left:
Downtown workers and residents
celebrate the return of spring
hanging baskets and planters;
Attendees of all ages pick up free
potted petunias at the Downtown
in Bloom flower giveaway;
Neighbors from the MCPHS
community join the celebration*

(Photos: Mike Hendrickson)



In FY25, dozens of gorgeous flower baskets and planters lined dozens of blocks across the district, creating a colorful backdrop for everyday life. Flowers brightened commutes, lunch breaks, and weekend outings — and reminded people that Downtown is a place worth spending time.

Flower Giveaway

To celebrate the return of spring and showcase this signature initiative, we hosted our second annual “Downtown in Bloom” Flower Giveaway at City Square Park. In collaboration with Bemis, we gave out 500 free potted petunias to neighbors; workers stepping out from nearby offices, residents from the surrounding apartment buildings, and visitors exploring Downtown. This event drew hundreds outside into the heart of Downtown for a cheerful weekday activation that sparked joy, inspired pride, and brought the community together.

Clockwise from left:
Bemis Farms Nursery, co-owned by Ed and Tina Bemis, creates and cares for Downtown's hanging baskets and planters; 500 free potted petunias are given out at the flower giveaway; Regular watering and fertilization keep baskets lush all season
(Photos: Mike Hendrickson)



We were thrilled by the response to the Downtown in Bloom Flower Giveaway and proud to be part of such a special event again this year. Flowers bring so much joy and color to any space, and we're happy to contribute to the ongoing transformation of Downtown Worcester with our partners at the BID.



**-Ed Bemis, Co-Owner
Bemis Farms Nursery**

Elevating Downtown Events

In FY25, the Downtown Worcester BID proved the power of events to drive momentum in the heart of the city. We delivered experiences that drew record crowds, supported local businesses, and strengthened Downtown as a vibrant destination for culture, entertainment, and community connection. Through thoughtful planning, elevated production, and strong partnerships, our events meaningfully boosted foot traffic, economic activity, and the energy of our neighborhood.

Winter Festival Weekend

Winter Festival Weekend once again brought thousands of people to the Worcester Common Oval for a joyful February celebration. Families enjoyed free ice skating, ice sculptures, winter treats, and a fun new draw — ice bumper cars. By activating both the Common and promoting events and special offers from nearby businesses and cultural attraction throughout the weekend, this event showed how Downtown can feel lively, welcoming, and full of wonder — even on the coldest days of the year.

Movies on the Common

Our outdoor movie series had two of its most successful seasons yet in Summer 2024 and 2025, bringing hundreds of people to the Common for free films under the stars. For 2025, we also upgraded the movie night experience with a high-quality LCD screen. With themed nights, pre-show activities, and creative community partnerships, Movies on the Common continued to bring fresh energy into Downtown after hours, giving residents, families, and workers more reasons to stay and enjoy the neighborhood.

Out to Lunch Festival & Farmers' Market

Out to Lunch reached new milestones in FY25, expanding to six weeks in Summer 2024 and a ten-week series in Summer 2025, its biggest year ever. For 2025, BID was also awarded a game-changing \$100,000 Urban Agenda Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Executive Office of Economic Development to strengthen the Out to Lunch farmers' market and improve food access Downtown, while also enhancing the event's production, performer lineup, branding and marketing, and more. To further increase food accessibility and affordability in our neighborhood, we also introduced a SNAP Match program that provided up to \$15 in matching dollars for SNAP users to shop the farmers' market, helping more residents access fresh, local foods. Week after week, the Common filled with local food vendors, farmers, small businesses, and thousands of attendees, making Out to Lunch a major driver of daytime vibrancy and economic activity in the district.

*Clockwise from left:
2025 Winter Festival attendees zip down a 90-foot alpine slide on Front Street; BID Marketing Intern Ross Ricker and Mayor Joseph M. Petty hand out free smiley face popsicles from the BID's icicle tricycle during the 2025 Out to Lunch kickoff; Local drag performers Victoria Obvious and Diva D entertain the crowd at the June 2025 Movie on the Common; Out to Lunch welcomes local vendors like Nataiwi Products; The BID's glow-in-the-dark park adds play and fun to outdoor events; Mystic Bowie's Talking Dreads headline the first Out to Lunch event of 2025*

(Photos: Mike Hendrickson)





Sponsors & Funders

Our partners play a vital role in shaping the future of Downtown Worcester. Thanks to your investment, events come to life, public spaces thrive, and opportunities grow for everyone who lives, works, and visits here. We are proud to collaborate with so many who believe in our city center and its potential. Thank you for your commitment to a stronger, more vibrant Downtown.

100 FM The Pike, 98.9 NASH Icon
& 104.5 WXLO
AC Hotel Worcester
The Arbella at Bramble Hill
Bay State Bank
Bemis Farms Nursery
Brew Café & Bakery
The Canal District Alliance
City of Worcester
Commonwealth of Massachusetts:
Executive Office of Economic Development
Cornerstone Bank
Country Bank
DCU Center / ASM Global
Digital Fallout Network
Discover Central MA

Don't Touch My Podcast
Eye Audio Radio, Inc.
Far Shot Worcester
Fontaine Bros., Inc.
Greater Worcester Community Foundation
Guitar Center Foundation
Howard Stein Hudson
JAM Corporation
Kelleher & Sadowsky
LEI Corporation
M&T Bank
Manny Jae Media
Market 32 & Price Chopper
Mass Cultural Council
MassDevelopment
Mass General Brigham Health Plan

Mercantile Center
Merrill Lynch
Polar Beverages
Quinsigamond Community College
Southeast Asian Coalition of Central Mass.
Streetplus
UniBank
Unity Radio 97.9 FM WUTY
WCCA TV
WICN Public Radio
WIN Waste Innovations
Worcester Arts Council
Worcester Central Kids Calendar
Worcester Cultural Coalition
Worcester Red Sox
Worcester Regional Airport



Left to right:
2025 Movies on the Common sponsors appear on the new LCD screen;
Guitar Center Foundation offers free guitar lessons at the 2025
Out to Lunch Festival & Farmers' Market

Right page:
Ice sculpture at the 2025 Winter Festival; The Village leads a drum circle at Out to Lunch;
Refreshed branding for Out to Lunch and Movies on the Common brings new energy to event
marketing for 2025; Content creator Stefany Boateng shares excitement about Downtown
events like the Winter Festival; New England Dairy Council serves custom drinks from its "milk
truck"; "VivaCity" interactive misting art keeps Out to Lunch attendees cool; Neighbors like Sarah
Hallowell from The Hanover Theatre shop the expanded farmers' market at Out to Lunch

(Photos: Mike Hendrickson)



Our Team

Board of Directors

Julian Wade, Chair

Davis Publications / The Printers Building Trust

Julie Holstrom, Vice Chair

Worcester Business Development Corporation

Troy Siebels, Treasurer

The Hanover Theatre & Conservatory
for the Performing Arts

Mary Simone, Clerk

AC Hotel Worcester

Mark Borenstein

Prince Lobel Tye LLP

Evelyn Cabrera

YWCA of Central Massachusetts

Sean Harris

Quinsigamond Community College

Paul Morano

City of Worcester

Seth Pitts

Bay State Bank

Joffrey Smith

Joffrey Smith Financial / Concordia Exchange

Margaret Wong

Massachusetts Community College Council



Top to Bottom:
BID Board Vice Chair Julie Holstrom at
the BID's 2024 Annual Meeting at
the JMAC BrickBox Theater;
Program Coordinator Alex Monaco
with John LaHair of the DCU Center and
drag performers at Movies on the Common;
Program Director Victoria Mariano
and Board Member Paul Morano at Out to Lunch;
Marketing Director Lisa Malo delivering joy on the
BID's ice trike with custom smiley face popsicles

(Photos: Mike Hendrickson)

Right:
The Downtown Worcester BID team,
including office pup Harlowe,
hosts the 2025 Downtown in Bloom
Flower Giveaway at City Square Park

Below:
BID staff members bring energy
and excitement to the coldest time
of year at the 2025 Winter Festival

(Photos: Mike Hendrickson)



Staff

Katelyn O'Brien
Executive Director

Lisa Malo
Marketing Director

Victoria Mariano
Program Director

Alex Monaco
Program Coordinator

Siobhan Davis
Administrative Coordinator (as of October 2025)

Miguel Fernandez-Nazario
Operations Manager (Streetplus)

FY25 Interns

Wynnie Gross, Data Analyst (Clark University)

Ryan Hovey, Data Analyst (Clark University)

Ross Ricker, Marketing (Fitchburg State University)

Get in touch with Downtown Worcester!

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Worcester, MA 01608

  [@downtownworchesterbid](https://www.instagram.com/downtownworchesterbid)



Front: Cirque de Light performer lights up the "You Belong Here"
Celebration on Salem Street in October 2025

Right: Center for Living & Working intern Dlyon hands out popsicles
with the BID at the 2025 Out to Lunch Festival & Farmers' Market

(Photos: Mike Hendrickson)

